United Nations E/ICEF/2001/P/L.30

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
16 November 2000

Original: English

For information

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
First regular session 2001
22-26 and 29 January 2001
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

Country note**

Mexico

Summary

The Executive Director presents the country note for Mexico for a programme of cooperation for the period 2002 to 2006.

The situation of children and women

1. Mexico has a population of 99.2 million, the eleventh largest in the world, 43.5 per cent of whom are children under the age of 18. The country has 31 states and a federal district, with much of its very diverse population grouped in a band across the south-central part of the country. The current fertility rate of 2.4 is projected to drop to 1.8 by 2010, reflecting a demographic transition in which the proportion of children is expected to decline, with a corresponding increase, first in the number of adolescents, and later in the number of older persons. Due to poverty, many children migrate, with or without their families, within rural areas, from rural to urban areas, among urban areas, and to the United States. This results in family instability and a large number of working children. According to 1996 statistics, 3.5 million children age 12 to 17 are part of the formal or informal labour force.

2. Economic growth over the last decade has made Mexico an upper-middle-income country, with a 1998 per capita gross domestic product of $4,459, but there remain tremendous disparities and social exclusion, with 58.2 per cent of wealth

* E/ICEF/2001/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 2001.

00-75183 (E) 061200

going to the top 20 per cent of the population (1997-1998). Following the 1994-1995 economic crisis, annual economic growth has been between 4.8 per cent and 6.5 per cent, fuelled in part by the North American Free Trade Agreement. This has not resulted, however, in benefits for many of the poorest and most marginalized sectors of society, and approximately 24 million Mexicans live in extreme poverty.

3. The presidential election in July 2000 marked an end to 71 years of single-party dominance. Policies and programmes of the new Government, now being finalized, will give priority to strengthening the decentralization process, participation of civil society in decision-making, investment in poor rural municipalities, and initiatives to solve social conflicts in Chiapas and other predominantly indigenous areas, combating corruption, crime and violence.

4. Progress has been made over the last decade in achieving the goals of the World Summit for Children. The infant mortality rate (IMR) and under-five mortality rate (U5MR) have been significantly reduced, to 23.6 and 28 per 1,000 live births, respectively. Severe child malnutrition has been cut in half (although it remains a concern in states with large indigenous populations), incidence of low birth weight has been reduced to less than 10 per cent, and iodine deficiency disorders and vitamin A deficiency have been virtually eliminated. Polio and neonatal tetanus have been eradicated. Immunization coverage of over 90 per cent has been achieved and maintained, leading to the reduction by 95 per cent of measles cases. Goals for diarrhoeal disease and acute respiratory infections have been met. Mexico has 100 per cent net enrolment, 85 per cent of school entrants reach grade 5, and 64 per cent of adolescents are enrolled in secondary school. Another significant advance includes the adoption early this year of the Law on the Protection of Child and Adolescent Rights, bringing legislation in line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5. Significant challenges remain, however, both in the World Summit for Children goals, and in the broader areas of child rights covered by the Convention. Decade goals, in the areas of maternal mortality, which stands at 55 per 100,000 live births, coverage of safe water and excreta disposal, and illiteracy, have not been met. Coverage of early childhood education has increased, but is still below 8 per cent. Other unmet goals include protection measures for children with special needs, attention to the health and nutrition needs of pregnant and lactating women, access by all couples to information and services to prevent early or too frequent pregnancies, and universal access by pregnant women to prenatal services and emergency obstetric care. An estimated 450,000 children are born annually to mothers under 20 years of age. Effective measures need to be taken to prevent HIV/AIDS from spreading beyond the 150,000 Mexicans currently infected, 2,600 of whom are under the age of 14. Challenges also remain in the area of legal reform for adolescent rights, especially at the state level, including the creation of a juvenile justice system.

6. Many unmet goals are particularly relevant to the most marginalized and socially excluded. For example, among the 10 per cent of the population that is indigenous, poverty rates are higher than the national average, IMR is twice as high, and almost 60 per cent of children are malnourished. Low birth weight is 2.5 times and illiteracy almost 4 times the national average. National policies have not yet succeeded in changing the social and economic dynamics underlying these ethnic disparities and the inequities between the poor south-west and rich central and

northern states. The fulfilment of all children's rights and sustainable achievement of all World Summit goals will largely depend on effective public policies to overcome socio-economic disparities and inequities.

Lessons learned from past cooperation

7. The mid-term review (MTR) took place in October 1998, halfway through the six-year programme cycle. It was determined, first, that the programme of cooperation must make more effort to support public policies anchored in the best interests of children. Second, efforts to ensure the full realization of child rights should include an increased focus on information gathering, analysis and advocacy, including the involvement of such partners as universities and civil society organizations. Third, the programme must shift from its past focus on financial support to the federal government and basic services at the state level to one that emphasizes problem analysis and design of rights-based social programmes in the public sector. For example, UNICEF can assist in identifying and studying such problems as child labour to draw attention to them and mobilize action. Fourth, to ensure effective implementation of a rights-based approach, the programme must also establish cooperation with state and local government agencies, attacking the problem of disparities through an integrated rather than sectoral approach. Fifth, it is critical that the programme focus increasingly on demand creation and on ensuring the capacity of duty bearers (including government at all levels, communities and families) to effectively respond to that demand. Sixth, a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation should be taken, both to improve efficiency and effectiveness of cooperation and to identify successful models for possible replication. Seventh, the programme should facilitate the establishment of broad consensus among public institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and political parties. Finally, the programme needs to have a realistic budget, measurable goals and clear accountability for involved parties.

Proposed country programme strategy

8. The proposed programme of cooperation is based on a vision in which, within a generation, Mexico will have a culture where children's rights are fully realized and democracy is consolidated by active participation of children and adolescents, families and excluded groups in decision-making. Human development of excluded social groups will be a national priority, and reduction of disparities and protection of rights will be cornerstones of national social and economic policies and programmes.

9. UNICEF and its counterparts will be involved in fostering change in legislation, policies and social programmes, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child; facilitating consensus building on children's rights between the state and civil society; collecting, analysing and disseminating information and good practices related to child rights; drawing attention to shortfalls in child rights fulfilment that require action; and supporting participatory change.

10. The 2002-2006 country programme will contribute to promotion and protection of the rights of children through support to the development of policies and programmes aimed at reducing social and economic disparities, reducing the

vulnerability of children and adolescents at risk, and supporting the rights of children in need of special protection. The programme will use five main strategies. First, it will emphasize advocacy designed to bring social policies, legislation and interventions into line with the Convention. Second, communication and social mobilization will be promoted, both to build a broad consensus on child rights and to create more effective demand for fulfilment of rights and provision of social services. A broad range of civil society partners will be mobilized to become an active part of the Global Movement for Children. Third, the programme will work to build capacity for effective response to children's rights. Fourth, enhanced participation and empowerment of children, adolescents and women, especially from excluded social groups, will be fostered. Fifth, the programme will provide limited support to strengthen social services in priority areas where marginalized social groups are concentrated. In addition to these strategies, efforts will be made to identify and replicate proven strategies and good practices, both within Mexico and internationally.

11. The programme will involve a broad range of partners, including the three branches of the state; public institutions at central, state and municipal level; and NGOs. It will foster the exchange of information on successful national and international models for promoting child rights, and establish, for each programme, a reference group comprised of civil society representatives, including children and young people. The programme will consist of three gender-sensitive, multisectoral programmes and will use a child development and protection framework. The programme will fall within the commitments of the Mexican State to the New Global Agenda for Children and will adopt a life cycle approach.

12. The *child rights in public policy programme* will contribute to: (a) development of more coherent social policies for children at federal and state levels; (b) inclusion of child rights as a central element in long-term public policies, ensuring the application of the Law on the Protection of Child and Adolescent Rights; (c) increased allocation of public resources to benefit children (including the 20/20 Initiative); and (d) increased equity in access to basic social services across geographic areas, social strata and ethnic groups. The programme will consist of ongoing situation assessment and analysis; legislative, administrative and institutional reform; child rights education and research with universities; and monitoring of project-level indicators and participatory evaluations.

13. The *programme for special protection of the rights of children and adolescents* will seek to improve coverage and quality of special protection services and basic education. Activities will cover three areas: urban children and adolescents at risk or in need of special protection; rural children and adolescents at risk; and border children and adolescents at risk.

14. The *rights of indigenous children programme* will seek to promote sustainable local human development in communities with a high proportion of indigenous peoples, based on improved monitoring and analysis, participatory local planning, and enhanced demand creation. The programme will promote culturally appropriate actions in monitoring and analysis of the situation of indigenous children and families, institutional strengthening, and community empowerment. Wherever feasible, UNICEF support will also include capacity-building in national disaster preparedness and response.

15. Due to a number of external factors, progress in the development of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) has proceeded slowly. The UNICEF situation analysis will thus provide important input. Work on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) will be undertaken in 2001 after the new Government has been installed. Implications of the CCA and UNDAF for UNICEF cooperation will thus be reflected in the country programme recommendation submitted to the Executive Board at its second regular session of 2001.

16. Cross-sectoral costs will include salaries of the UNICEF technical team, which will give assistance to all programmes. Because staff input to the programmes is essential for reaching objectives, regular resources will mainly be used to cover programme staff and related costs.

Estimated programme budget

17. Under the current programme, less than half of the $46 million budgeted has been raised. The new programme of cooperation will increasingly depend on local fund-raising. The Private Sector Division strategic plan for 2002-2006 aims to raise $2.1 million from product line marketing, and $6.9 million from private sector alliances and direct mail campaigns.

Estimated programme of cooperation, 2002-2006*

(In thousands of United States dollars)

	Regular resources	*Other resources*	*Total*
Child rights in public policy	690	1 640	2 330
Special protection of the rights of children and adolescents	370	3 200	3 570
Rights of indigenous children	370	3 200	3 570
Cross-sectoral costs	2 000	1 860	3 860
Total	**3 430**	**9 900**	**13 330**

* These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.